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RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY 1276
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 2297
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT 1888
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 6726
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ALGIERS 001099

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SUBJECT: CONTINUING TO ENGAGE GOA, MEDIA AND NGOS ON TIP

REF: ALGIERS 931

Classified By: DCM Thomas F. Daughton; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: Following the June 12 release of the 2007 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, we are continuing to engage the Algerian government and the media on TIP. The GOA still maintains that Algeria has been maligned and says that the government is addressing the TIP issue. The difference remains largely one of conceptual language: the GOA sees TIP as part of the overall problem of illegal immigration, a problem it acknowledges; but the GOA has yet to articulate TIP as a distinct issue and it is aware the clock is ticking.

At least one media contact has expressed interest in reporting on the trafficking aspect of illegal immigration. Three NGOs will distribute the Department's "Be Smart, Be Safe..." guide on TIP. END SUMMARY.

GOA STILL UNHAPPY

¶12. (C) In a July 14 meeting with poloff, Mohammed Amara (Director General of Juridical and Judicial Affairs, MOJ), Khedidja Ladjel Aloui (Private Secretary, Ministry of National Solidarity) and Saoudi Seddik (Deputy Director for the status of people, social affairs and agreements, MFA) spoke of GOA efforts to combat TIP and repeated the GOA's position that Algeria's Tier-3 TIP status was inappropriate. Both Amara and Seddik repeated the GOA mantra that the concept of trafficking in persons did not exist in Algerian law or culture, but added that the GOA will put forward TIP-related amendments to its laws by the end of 2007. Highlighting GOA activity, Aloui referenced a GOA interagency group that she said produces a yearly report on trafficking, the next edition of which is scheduled to be completed by mid-August.

¶13. (C) MFA Deputy Director for Human Rights Ahmed Saadi repeated the GOA refrain in a July 16 meeting, telling poloff that Algeria was upset about its Tier 3 TIP status and said the GOA was currently studying the TIP report. Saadi acknowledged Algeria's lack of TIP-specific legislation, but argued the country's current laws were being used to address TIP-related problems. He also referred to previous GOA responses to Embassy requests for information, as well as to recent press reports detailing police action against illegal immigration, citing these as evidence of GOA action on TIP.

¶14. (C) In both meetings, poloff stressed the need for a GOA public statement acknowledging TIP as a problem and asked

that a GOA TIP point of contact be named. In the July 14 meeting, Amara volunteered to be the POC and Aloui said her office was equally available. In the July 16 meeting, however, Saadi told poloff that "the foreign ministry is your point of contact on this issue." There was no response to the request for a public statement in either meeting. Amara asked the source of the 15,000 illegal immigrants mentioned in the TIP report and poloff responded that NGOs provided the information. Both Amara and Aloui said that NGO-supplied figures can't be trusted because the organizations "don't have the means to verify" them.

JOURNALIST REPORTS TRAFFICKING

¶ 15. (C) Mohamed Touati, a journalist for the French-language daily L'Expression, told poloff on July 15 that trafficking networks exist in Algeria, with individuals paying considerable amounts of money to travel from Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Mali. Touati described his former home of Djanet, a small oasis city in southeastern Algeria located 100 kilometers from the Libyan town of Ghat, as an important entry point, but was unable to provide numbers of victims or identify specific traffickers.

¶ 16. (C) Touati addressed trafficking using Algeria's semi-nomadic Tuareg population, a people he claimed preferred not to work. According to Touati, Tuaregs benefit from networks of illegal immigration because they hire individuals (often Nigers) to do agricultural and other work they do not want to do, paying them little. The relationship between Tuaregs and Nigers is facilitated by their shared language, Tamahaq.

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¶ 17. (C) Touati asserted that illegal immigrants are able to live and work in Djanet and Tamanrasset in part because some GOA officials have been paid off. He also said that illegal immigrants are often exploited and gave the example of how, in some cases, an employer becomes the sole provider of food, shelter, and payment for the trafficked victim, creating a relationship of dependency ripe for exploitation. He noted that, although the GOA occasionally rounds up and deports individuals, many simply return at a later date, often after paying large sums of money.

ENGAGING GOA, THE MEDIA AND NGOs

¶ 18. (C) Since June, we have been developing a strategy to engage the GOA, NGOs and the media on TIP issues. In order to garner GOA support for taking action on TIP issues, we would like to host first a Digital Video Conference on the subject for targeted GOA officials. If that program is successful, we would like to follow it up with a special single country project or voluntary visitor program to send government officials, members of the press and social welfare groups to the U.S. for an in-depth study of how all three elements can work together to eliminate TIP. Separately, we will approach the state-owned television corporation to encourage it to broadcast G/TIP-provided films and documentaries. We also intend to continue to encourage Algerian journalists who have covered illegal immigration to report on its trafficking aspects. Finally, the European NGO CISPA and Algerian NGOs AIDS Algerie and SOS Femmes en Detresse have agreed to distribute "Be Smart, Be Safe...", the Department's pamphlet on TIP. We will continue to encourage the NGOs to increase their public discussion of the TIP problem.

COMMENT

¶ 19. (C) Now almost two months after the release of the TIP report, we continue to hear the same GOA message and see no

evidence of action (reftel) in the terms sought by the report. There is an important disconnect in our conversations. On the one hand, the GOA says that the concept of TIP does not exist in its law. On the other hand, the GOA says it has laws that combat TIP and that the GOA is applying those laws. For all its activity, the GOA has been incapable of or unwilling to supply the kind of information that we have sought. Government representatives seem more interested in the negative perception associated with Tier 3 status than demonstrating that the government is doing something to address the problem. This may be because the GOA has interpreted its Tier 3 listing as an attack on Algeria's bona fides as a champion of social justice issues in the region. To counter this, our demarches to the GOA have taken the approach that TIP is a worldwide problem, one we are struggling with ourselves, that exists in spite of responsible government efforts to eliminate TIP. We have asked GOA officials for the government's cooperation in stopping TIP in much the same way we work to combat other illegal activities, such as transnational terrorism.

¶10. (C) In contrast to the government, journalist Mohamed Touati, who reported no previous contact with the Embassy and who has not covered the trafficking aspect of illegal immigration, articulated the links between the two perspectives in a way the GOA has not, at least to date. He appears to understand the problem and believed that Algeria was beginning to acknowledge it as well. He also expressed a willingness to "collaborate" on TIP-related issues, including reporting, though he preferred meeting at the Embassy because of the "sensitivity" of the subject. Media coverage through Touati combined with distribution of the Department's pamphlet on TIP should help to increase public awareness of the problem.

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